



Call to worship: Lord, we come from where you have placed us. Lord, we come as we are. Lord, we come with our limitations and our expectations. Lord, we come to know you more deeply. Lord, we come to be shaped by your love and your truth. Lord, we come to become the people you are calling us to be. Amen.

Hymn StF 86 Praise the Lord! You heavens, adore him

<https://youtu.be/wxcqtO8fYK0?si=RAbK0wRDp0uxHFUq>

Praise the Lord! ye heavens, adore Him;
praise Him, angels in the height;
sun and moon, rejoice before Him,
praise Him, all ye stars of light.
Praise the Lord! for He hath spoken;
worlds His mighty voice obeyed;
laws which never shall be broken
for their guidance He hath made.

Praise the Lord! for He is glorious;
never shall His promise fail;
God hath made His saints victorious;
sin and death shall not prevail.

Praise the God of our salvation!
Hosts on high, His power proclaim;
heaven and earth and all creation,
laud and magnify His name.

Worship, honour, glory, blessing,
Lord, we offer unto Thee;
young and old, Thy praise expressing,
in glad homage bend the knee.
All the saints in heaven adore Thee;
we would bow before Thy throne;
as Thine angels serve before Thee,
so on earth Thy will be done.

Prayer of Praise

Psalm 24 : The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to that is false, and do not swear deceitfully. They will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation. Such is the company of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

Prayer of confession

Dear God, we recall our failures in the race set before us: the times we failed to serve as a team; the times we remained silent when we should have spoken; the times we knowingly and unknowingly closed our eyes and ears, and held back our hands and feet from doing your will. We confess the times we neglected to sharpen the gifts you have given us and failed to keep in step with you.

Compassionate and loving God, in the midst of all our shortcomings, you have never left us. Through Christ, you have carried our weaknesses, and by your Holy Spirit you continue to guide and strengthen us. Therefore, with confidence in your mercy, we ask your forgiveness and sincerely say, "We are sorry."

Restore us to the race. Put us back on the field of your service. Fill us anew with your Spirit, that we may run with perseverance the race set before us. Through Christ, our Master and Teacher. Amen.

Come, thou Fount of every
blessing;
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above;
praise the mount! I'm fixed upon
it,
mount of God's unchanging love!

Here I raise my Ebenezer;
hither by thy help I'm come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart; O take and seal it;
seal it for thy courts above.

Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Sermon

Dear friends in Christ, as we have observed Bible Month throughout June and journeyed through the letter to the Philippians, we have discovered that Paul frequently uses the language of athletics and sport to describe the Christian life.

What are they? Calling believers to strive side by side (1:27), to run the race (2:16), to forget what lies behind and press on towards the goal (3:13–14), and finally to receive the victor's crown and strive together as fellow athletes (4:1, 3).

As I reflected on these images, my mind naturally turned to the many major sporting events taking place around the world at the moment. The ICC Women's T20 Cricket World Cup, the FIFA Club World Cup, and Wimbledon are just a few of the global sporting events capturing people's attention. Among them, football, played on one of the world's greatest stages, I thought of sharing some reflections. I am not familiar with all the rules of football, but I still watch, and I still always struggle to understand offsides. So today, I do not bring new reflections. Rather, I want to share a few simple reminders, truths we already know but perhaps need to hear again.

The statement by Pope Leo, just a day before the World Cup started, was one of the motivations I have been listening to recently, and it has led me to think and reflect more and more. Maybe we will start from that.

"The World Cup begins tomorrow, and many will watch the matches. Soccer reminds us of something we must not forget: life is not a race to show off on our own, but a path we learn to walk together. Anyone who does not know how to pass the ball, even if they have talent, has not yet understood the game. Anyone who does not know how to live with and for others has not yet understood life."

What a powerful reminder. In football, no matter how talented a player may be, the game is not won alone. In every game, people will support one of the teams. What about the players in the game? They always remember the question when they play: "Where do I belong?"

Every football player belongs to a team. No one walks onto the ground simply as an individual. From the moment a player puts on the club or national jersey, they represent something much bigger than themselves. The badge on the chest is more important than the name on the back. It reminds every player that they belong to a team, a club, and a shared purpose. In football, that sense of belonging shapes the way you play. It teaches you when to pass the ball, when to share the opportunity, when to look up, when to support a teammate, when to defend, and when to aim for the goal. Every decision is made not just for yourself but for the good of the team.

That is exactly what Paul says to the Corinthian church. You belong, and you are needed. It doesn't matter what role you have or what function you perform. Every part of the body has its own place, purpose, and value. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you," nor can the head say to the feet, "I don't need you." Every member matters.

That sense of belonging creates wholeness, gives us value, strengthens unity, and enables us to serve one another. The question for us this morning is: "To whom do you belong? And for whom are you playing?" Where do I belong?

Belonging is one of the deepest human needs. We all long to know that we are accepted, valued, and loved. It may be in our family, our neighbourhood, our workplace, our church, or among our friends. Wherever it is, we all need a place where we can truly say, "This is my home. These are my people."

John Bowlby, a well-known British psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, explained that from our earliest days, we need secure relationships; we are created to belong, and healthy relationships help us grow emotionally and even shape our brain development.

Christian faith tells us where we belong: we belong to Christ, and because we belong to Christ, we belong to one another. Therefore, Christian discipleship calls us to ask not only "Where do I belong?" but also, "Who can I help to know that they belong too?" It means making sure that no one is left on the sidelines, no one is forgotten, and no one is made to feel they do not belong.

A player's second question could be: How do I make progress?

The word "progress" is one that school-age children hear with fear.

When I was in school, we received progress cards every year. After the term exams and the year-end exams, the marks were written on the card. Then we had to take it home and ask our parents to sign it. That card showed the student's progress. The marks had to go up. The card had to show improvement.

Many people still carry that pressure in life. We think progress always means moving forward, going higher, achieving more, becoming better, and proving ourselves. But life is not always like that. Faith is not always like that, either.

Football teaches us something important here. In football, progress is not always a straight run towards the goal. Sometimes the best move is to pass sideways. Sometimes the ball is passed backwards. Sometimes it is even given back to the goalkeeper.

To someone who does not understand the game, it may look like the team is going in the wrong direction. But actually, they are maintaining possession, finding space, protecting the team, and preparing to move forward.

There are times when we seem to move forward quickly. There are also times when we feel we are standing still. Sometimes we even feel as though we are going backwards. That does not mean we are making no progress, nor does it mean that God has left us. At times, God is not taking us backwards; he is repositioning us, preparing us for the next move. Even failure can be part of progress.

Paul's body metaphor carries the powerful message that everyone is important. Every member has a place, every gift has a purpose, and every ministry has value. Progress in the Christian life is not measured by one person's ability, visibility, or capacity to function. Rather, it is measured by how the whole body grows, serves, and matures together in Christ.

Sometimes progress is repentance. Sometimes progress is learning patience. Sometimes progress is asking for help. Sometimes progress is resting before we can run again. We make progress by staying with Christ, listening to his voice, receiving help from others, and trusting that even the backward passes can be part of God's forward purpose. So, when life feels slow, when the ball goes sideways, when it goes backwards, or when you need to rest, do not lose heart. You are still in the game. God may be preparing the next move.

As I close my thoughts today, let me encourage you to take those two simple questions with you. First, where do you belong? The gospel gives us the answer. Second, how do you make progress? Faith gives us the answer. May we know where we belong, help others know that they belong too, and keep pressing on together in Christ. Amen.

Prayer of Intercession & Lord's Prayer

Lord, as we become truly convinced of our belonging in you, we seek your face for the needs of our own lives and for the needs of one another.

Lord, we pray for those who are searching for a sense of belonging. Let your Spirit guide them and be with them on their life journey. We also pray for ourselves and our friends who feel that life is not moving forward, perhaps because of illness, relationship struggles, or financial constraints. Have mercy on everyone who seeks your presence in their lives.

Lord, we pray for our local church and your Church throughout the world. May our worship and ministries affirm our belonging in you and with one another. Help every place of worship and service to be a beacon of hope and a place of refuge. Let your Spirit guide and inspire all who serve in different roles in your Church.

Lord, we pray for our nation and for our world. May people experience the joy of belonging through wise leadership, just decisions, and compassionate service. We remember places of war and conflict. Let love and justice prevail and may the breeze of your peace fill people's lives.

Lord, we pray for our earth. Help us to live responsibly, caring for your creation and not harming its well-being. We especially pray for those suffering from natural calamities.

Lord, as we begin a new week, be with us on our life's journey and help us to experience your love and care. We especially pray for our children who are completing another school year. We thank you for the gift of education and pray for all who serve within it. May the holidays be a time of joy, rest, renewal, and refreshment.

We place these prayers in the name of Christ, who came into the world to make us his own and to bring us into your family. Together we pray the prayer he taught us, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn StF 564: O Thou who camest from above <https://youtu.be/IJ6pmSEzJ5A?si=pmEjehHWbG-WCiuM>

O Thou who camest from above,
the pure celestial fire to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
upon the altar of my heart.

There let it for Thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return,
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work and speak and think for Thee,
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up Thy gift in me.

Ready for all Thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat,
till death Thy endless mercies seal,
and make my sacrifice complete.

Blessing : May the God of every season be our guide and light as we run the race set before us. May the God of every move be our joy and strength as we press on towards the goal. May the God of all creation assure us that we belong to him and to one another. And may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with us, remain with us, and those whom we love and pray for, this day and always. Amen.